



MITCHELL PHOENIX

Can You See Opportunities to Govern Change?

Governing Change means seeking out opportunities to innovate and adapt to the change which is taking place all the time in our business environment. It means having the flexibility, creativity and resourcefulness to ensure that we are commanding change, rather than simply reacting to it every day.

Where can we find opportunities to Govern Change? A useful place to start is to look for instances in which our idea of what is happening - what we want or expect to be taking place around us - is not matched by the reality. Wherever there is an incongruity between our vision of reality, and the actual reality, there is a chance to Govern Change.

In *Innovation and Entrepreneurship*, Peter Drucker cites an example of just such an incongruity. A pharmaceutical company salesman wanted to go into business for himself. He looked for an instance where the vision of what people wanted did not match the reality.

He found it in eye surgeons' experience of conducting routine cataract operations. The surgeons were highly skilled and felt comfortable in conducting every stage of cataract procedures except one. When they had to cut a particular ligament and tie off the blood vessels the eye was in danger, and surgeons dreaded this short section of every procedure. The surgeons' vision of how they would like to feel and the control they wanted to have did not match the reality of this section of the operation.

The pharmaceutical company salesman considered how this might be done differently in the future, and soon found an answer. An enzyme had been discovered in 1890 which would dissolve the ligament in question. At the time it was discovered, science did not have a method of storing this enzyme for any length of time, and so it had never been considered for use in cataract operations. The salesman set to work and in a few months had discovered a preservative which would extend the shelf life of the enzyme without reducing its power to dissolve the eye ligament. Within a short space of time, eye surgeons were using his patented compound to make this short section of the operation run to their satisfaction.

What would have prevented the salesman from Governing Change? If he had not asked questions about established practice, if he had not really listened to the people he wanted to do business with, if he had accepted the received wisdom that eye operations had always been done like that, if he had not dared to challenge the established procedure, he would not have been able to find a solution. He did not need significant research and development funding

because the enzyme had already been discovered. What he did need was a willingness to ask questions, to listen hard and to see how what was already available to anyone who cared to look could be used to advantage. This is Governing Change.